



# National Education Rankings: What Nevada Can Learn and a Proposal for Moving Forward

November 9, 2023

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## Three Phases of Our Research

- **Phase I**

- What makes up three national K-12 education rankings?
  - Education Week's *Quality Counts* rankings
  - Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Kids Count* rankings
  - Fordham Institute's *America's Best and Worst Metro Areas for School Quality*

- **Phase II**

- How has Nevada performed in recent history?

- **Phase III**

- Given the findings from Phases I and II, how should Nevada respond or proceed?

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## Purpose of this Report

- Phase III builds upon Phases I and II of this report by:
  - Further exploring **the value and shortcomings** of existing state education rankings;
  - Outlining **critical concepts** for measuring State educational performance; and
  - Proposing **essential considerations** for establishing a fair and robust system for state-to-state comparisons.
- This report concludes with a suggested approach for creating a **Nevada-specific scorecard** to measure the performance of the State's K-12 education system.

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## The Value of State Rankings

- Provide a helpful **digest** of complex information.
- Offer **context** for comparing the performance of various entities.
- But are sometimes more about generating **headlines and clicks**.
- Leading Rankings Include:
  - KIDS COUNT
  - Quality Counts
  - Best States for Education
  - Best & Worst States for Education

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## The Challenge with State Rankings

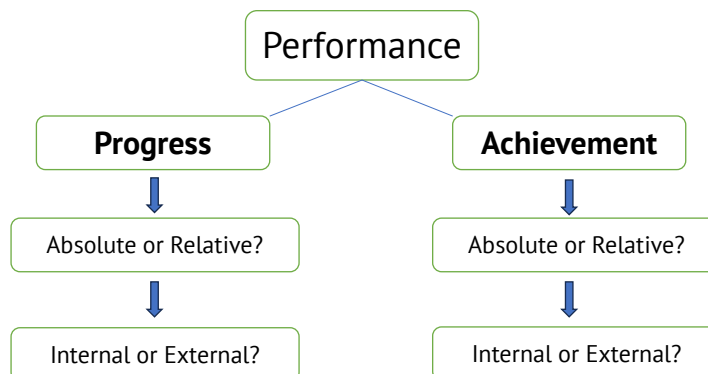
- Revisiting some of the findings from Phases I and II of this report:
  - Each ranking system is **unique** and should not be compared to others.
  - The **choice of data points** significantly influences the rankings.
  - The rankings may be based on a sample of students or **challenging-to-interpret data**.
  - The data used can sometimes be **old**.
  - All rankings are **relative**.
- Relying on existing national rankings has more drawbacks than benefits.
- But interstate comparisons can be beneficial. How to get there?

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## Measuring State Education System Performance (1)



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## Measuring State Education System Performance (2)

- Measuring *achievement* (which can be *absolute* or *relative*):
  - **Absolute achievement** can be measured against a pre-defined objective or one's own previous performance. The benchmark for achievement is fixed.
    - Example: The A through F scale often used for students' grades, where everyone can succeed or fail.
  - **Relative achievement** is measured against the performance of other participants. The benchmark is variable and unknown in advance.
    - Example: An athletic competition, where only some will succeed while others will fail.

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## Measuring State Education System Performance (3)

- Measuring *progress* (which can be *absolute* or *relative*):
  - Progress can be **absolute**; for example, did the State perform better than last year? Progress can also be **relative**; did it make more progress than other states (or, in the case of the pandemic, did it regress less than other states)?
  - Both measurement approaches are valid and useful, depending on the circumstances.
  - Sometimes, absolute achievement is unrealistic as a short-term objective.

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## Measuring State Education System Performance (4)

- *Internal versus external* performance measures:
  - **Internal measures** of education performance compare the performance of Nevada **to itself** over time.
    - Example: Comparing this year's graduation rate to last year's.
  - **External measures** of state education performance compare Nevada's performance or subgroups' performance **to other states**.
    - Example: Comparing this year's graduation rate to other states.

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## Moving Forward (1)

- Given the benefits and drawbacks, how might Nevada proceed?
- Use **existing** multi-state data sets.
- Seek out **meaningful comparisons** with groups of states that might vary.
- For each metric, are we measuring **achievement or progress**?  
Is it on an **absolute or relative** basis?

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## Moving Forward (2)

- Nevada already has tools to internally measure performance:
  - Nevada School Performance Framework
  - Alternative Performance Framework
  - Nevada Growth Model
  - Nevada Report Card
  
- So, how do we externally measure the State's performance?
  
- By contemplating and thoughtfully answering a lot of questions...

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## The Nevada K-12 Scorecard

- These considerations are covered in greater depth in our full Phase III report:
  - General contents;
  - Performance metrics to measure;
  - Data considerations;
  - Scoring format; and
  - Additional questions to consider.
  
- AB 400 and SB 98 provide a mandate and an opportunity for the CSF through an expanded mission and greater authority.

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## Concluding Remarks

- Nevada would benefit from a **more thoughtful and relevant process** for comparing its K-12 education system to other states.
- Our Phase III report explores existing rankings' **value and shortcomings**.
- It also highlights **critical concepts** for measuring State-level performance and establishing a fair and robust system for state-to-state comparisons.
- The Guinn Center welcomes the opportunity to serve in any capacity that is helpful.

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## Thank you!

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